



ALBUQUERQUE TEACHERS FEDERATION



Keep the Culture War Out of New Mexico's Classrooms

A FIGHT WE CANNOT WIN ALONE

We, the Albuquerque Teachers Federation (ATF), are actively attempting to counter moves by highly funded far-right national organizations hell-bent on importing the culture war from states like Florida to school boards and classrooms right here in New Mexico. From book banning to violence and threats directed at educators and school officials, this is a manufactured social conflict that has brought chaos, hate and division to places of learning all across our country.

This is a fight we cannot win alone. **We need Democratic Party support.** If we don't work together, there is no guarantee we will be able to do something as simple as teach our students the truth.



“The path to save the nation is very simple — it’s going to go through the school boards.”

-Steve Bannon

These were the words of far-right insurrectionist and former Trump administration chief strategist Steve Bannon in his podcast last year.

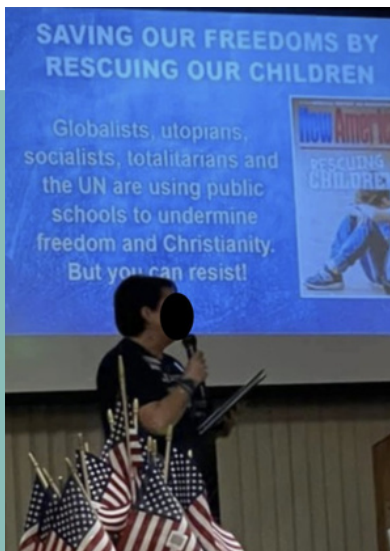
Bannon was speaking to a heavily financed reactionary strategy already in full swing all across the country. With the deadly mayhem that unfolded on January 6th fresh in our memories, we would be remiss to ignore the extremist forces currently mobilizing to drag the Albuquerque Public School Board sharply to the right.

MOMS FOR LIBERTY

At the head of the pack of conservative “parents’ rights” groups currently waging Steve Bannon’s war to impose his white nationalist agenda are Moms For Liberty (also known as M4L) — a rapidly growing organization of nearly 100,000 members made up of a network of county-specific chapters across the country, including right here in Bernalillo County.



Moms for Liberty co-founder Tina Descovich (left) poses with Executive Director of Program Development Marie Rogerson (right).



Moms for Liberty anti-CRT event

While outwardly M4L’s leadership maintains it is “non-partisan,” the organization’s stated positions and political affiliations all indicate it is orientated to the conspiratorial far-right. During a recent Moms For Liberty event about Critical Race Theory (CRT), the group went as far as to claim that “globalists, utopians, socialists, totalitarians and the UN are using public schools to undermine freedom and Christianity.” They also make no secret of their close relationship with the Trump family, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, PragerU, Parents Defending Education, The Heritage Foundation, and, of course, Steve Bannon.

A HISTORY OF AUTHORITARIAN TACTICS



Moms for Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice appears on Steve Bannon's show *War Room: Pandemic* on March 30, 2022. During the show she called for "conservative search firms" to find "new educational leaders" after M4L purges the workforce of anyone who fails to get in line.

line with M4L's agenda are to be targeted. Anti-abortion activist Allie Stuckey recently said the following in a speech at an M4L event: "Anyone who tries to stand between us and our children will be removed from power [...] we will rally and fundraise and make noise until you are stripped of your titles and ridden of your power."

This threat was brutally carried in November in Berkeley County School District, South Carolina. Moms for Liberty-backed candidates took six seats on the local school board, winning the group an outright majority. In the first session, the newly elected school board voted to fire the district's first Black superintendent, terminate the district's lawyer, replace the board chair with a Moms for Liberty member, ban 'critical race theory' and set up a committee to decide whether certain books and materials should be banned from schools.

Jennifer Jenkins, a school board member in Brevard County, Florida, reported that after Moms For Liberty targeted the county's LGBT+ guidelines, activists began calling school board members "pedophiles" and threatening them, saying, "We're coming at you like a freight train! We are going to make you beg for mercy. If you thought January 6 was bad, wait until you see what we have for you!"

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-Florida M4L Activist

In Livingston County, Michigan, Moms For Liberty posted an ominous message on Facebook using coded language to insinuate that January 6th-style political violence would be waged against anyone backing President Biden's review of threatening behavior in school board meetings: "Not a single person on the right side of the aisle better be backing this, if they are they better be prepared to be REMOVED 1776 style."

Moms For Liberty brands itself as a grassroots movement of "joyful warriors." They view themselves as proud "mama bears" waging a holy David and Goliath struggle against the evil, anti-white behemoth that is the American Public School System — an institution they see as

In the crosshairs are the usual targets. Anything outside of a *Gone With The Wind*-style portrayal of our nation's past is to be expunged from curriculums. Likewise, Sex Ed, as well as any and all things LGBT+, must be liquidated immediately.

Any school board members, administrators, teachers, or parents who fail to fall in

rife with “groomers” out to brainwash their kids into having gender reassignment surgery. As another of the group’s founders, Tina Descovich, put it when she joined Rush Limbaugh’s show: “It sounds a little melodramatic, but there is evil working against us on a daily basis.”

FUNDED BY DARK MONEY

While Moms For Liberty claim their funding comes almost entirely from \$50 membership fees and T-shirt sales, the truth is they are connected at the hip to dark Republican money.

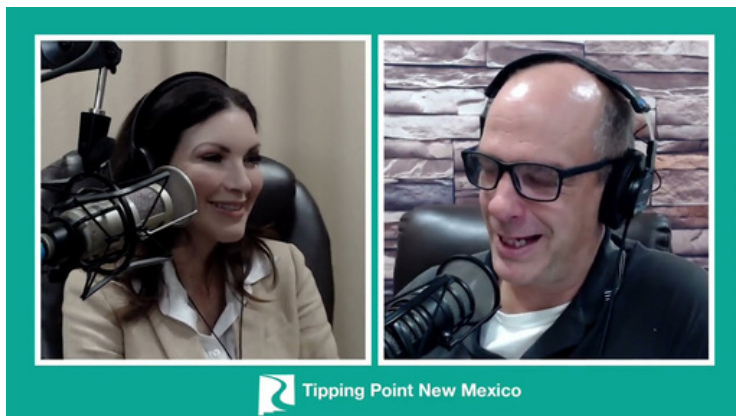
The Tampa Bay Times has reported the following about Moms for Liberty’s financials:

- M4L is incorporated as an Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(4) organization – a form that lends itself to dark money political shenanigans.
- The group formed three federal and one state political action committees, one of which is a SuperPAC able to accept unlimited donations.
- M4L’s press is being handled by Calvary Strategies whose CEO is a former campaign manager and chief of staff to Sen. (then-Gov.) Rick Scott.
- Two of Moms for Liberty’s National Summit sponsors, the Leadership Institute and Heritage Foundation, are critical members of the Council for National Policy, a secretive network of right-wing billionaires and hyper-conservative leaders that underwrites and coordinates right-wing politics.

Media watchdog non-profit Media Matters has emphasized that Moms For Liberty are in fact “well-connected partisans [...] opportunistically manufacturing outrage and selling it to parents under the guise of empowerment.”

Former Democratic Senatorial Council Emily Amick has stated that “what feels organic is actually a well-funded effort supported by the highest levels of the conservative machine to make ‘mama bears’ the tip of the spear in their culture war.”

MOMS FOR LIBERTY IN NEW MEXICO



Moms for Liberty Bernalillo County chapter founder Sarah Jane Allen appears on the podcast *TP New Mexico* on 08/23/22 with Rio Grande Foundation founder, Paul Gessing. Gessing attended an APS Board meeting last November in support of M4L, during which he used the public comment section to attack and belittle trans identity.

Moms for Liberty currently has a chapter in Bernalillo County. In a podcast interview with Paul Gessing of the Rio Grande Foundation last August, Moms for Liberty Bernalillo County founder Sarah Jane Allen stated the chapter’s membership, at that time, stood at around 75 people and was rapidly growing. “We look at Bernalillo County as the initial cell,” Allen tells Gessing, “Once more people join we will start other

chapters once the support is there." The two go on to discuss their mutual dislike of teachers' unions and the need to redact school curriculums, with Allen emphasizing that a lot of what's taught in school these days goes "above and beyond what should be taught in the classroom," and should in fact "be taught in the home or with your pastor."

Moms for Liberty Bernalillo County has been active in working with right-wing school board members in an attempt to bring their agenda to Albuquerque Public Schools. Thanks to the vigilance and advocacy of our union members and community allies, M4L has not succeeded in redacting true history from our curriculums or forcing through policy changes that would endanger the safety of LGBT+ students. Under pressure from M4L there have, however, been concessionary changes to the APS Parent Rights and Responsibilities Policy. During increasingly heated APS Board meetings, M4L members and supporters accused our city's hardworking educators, who give everything for the good of our students, of pedophilia and grooming.

If M4L and their allies gain the majority on our school board it's game over for APS. It is our job to keep our schools safe for all students and members of our community. Our goal must be to ensure that the public in public education is genuine and has the health of our system at heart.

How We win



Decorated war hero and former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "Don't join the book burners. Don't think you are going to conceal faults by concealing the evidence that they ever existed. Don't be afraid to go into your library and read every book."

Censorship and entrenched indifference have been the lynchpin of history's worst authoritarian regimes. Steve Bannon, one of the masterminds

of the January 6 attack on our democracy, has publicly stated that his plan to establish an authoritarian regime in this country starts with the hostile takeover of our public school boards. As we have seen, this course of action is well and truly underway in other states. Together, we have the power to stop him in New Mexico.

We must VOTE in the upcoming 2023 School Board election. But, voting is only a start. We must work together to educate our families, friends, and neighbors on the importance of public schools as the bedrock of our democracy. We must volunteer to get out the vote, making our voices heard, both as supporters of public education and strong Democrats.

The Albuquerque Teachers Federation Unified COPE Committee is going to endorse early for

the APS Board race in November of 2023. We are already working as strong partners with the Democratic Party of New Mexico to unify behind ATF COPE-endorsed candidates. These candidates will fight to ensure that our children receive a high-quality standard of public education, free of hate, censorship and division. They will also work in the best interests of our hardworking APS employees.

Amid simmering extremism nationwide, so much is at stake. Our public schools, our democracy, our freedoms, and the well-being of our families and communities are all on the line. While others attack public education and our democratic institutions, maligning educators as “groomers” and worse, we, the people of New Mexico, must roll up our sleeves and prepare to put in the work to protect all that we hold dear. While in the past, some in our communities have paid little attention to school board races, those days are over now. In November 2023 we must all come together to cast our ballots. In doing so, we will deliver a resounding defeat to these political zealots and their billionaire backers at the national level, who want to bring their manufactured culture war to our beautiful state.

**WE WIN WITH COMMUNITY.
WE WIN WITH SOLIDARITY.**

